



# CURRICULUM

Areas of study, learning objectives  
& related competences

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Project **PEARL** has been funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



## 1.1 Background and Rationale

*The PEARL Curriculum realizes the Knowledge Framework developed within the scope of the project and provides a comprehensive, modular, and application-oriented roadmap for ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) education.*

*This curriculum defines the subject areas, modules, learning objectives, and content, thereby creating a clear roadmap that enables PEARL resources to be fully or partially integrated into both new and existing ESG-focused training programs.*

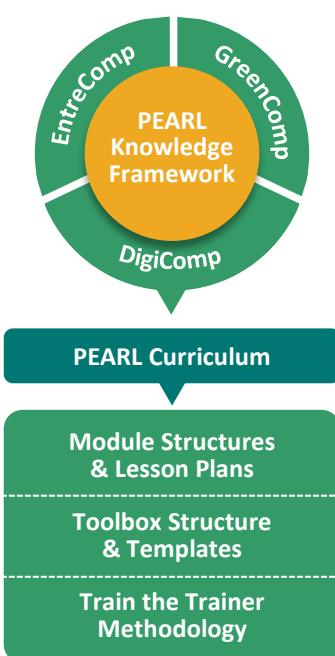
Designed with a modular structure, the PEARL curriculum has been developed to facilitate the practical application of the PEARL Knowledge Framework. This provides a concrete structure for SMEs managers and VET trainers, enabling flexible learning/teaching paths that can be tailored to the specific needs of SMEs. The core topics outlined in the curriculum are planned to correspond to approximately 3 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits and cover a total of 90 hours of learning.

This comprehensive course outline and curriculum includes the definition of concrete modules, learning objectives, and outcomes. Additionally, it serves as a foundational framework upon which the outputs of other work packages (particularly WP3 and WP4) will be built. The curriculum outlines the general architecture of the training materials to be developed, clearly defining the learning objectives, subject headings, modules, and content structures necessary for effective ESG education.

This approach supports SMEs in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effectively and sustainably integrate ESG principles into their business processes. It also enables educators to easily adapt and use PEARL resources in different contexts. Furthermore, the outputs that will be developed under WP3—A3 (Module Structures and Lesson Plans), A4 (Toolbox Structure



and Templates), and A5 (Train the Trainer Methodology)—will be built upon the PEARL Curriculum and will serve as complementary elements of the PEARL learning methodology at the operational level. Thus, the general curriculum will be transformed into practical application tools, contributing to the effective implementation of ESG training processes by trainers and SMEs.



## 1.2 Target Audience and User Groups

*The PEARL Curriculum has been developed to support the transformation of SMEs related to ESG and is a flexible, modular, and competency-based training resource. This curriculum is designed to meet the needs of both actors directly involved in ESG learning and implementation and groups indirectly affected by ESG transformation.*

*The country reports prepared for the project partner countries within the scope of the PEARL Project and the interviews conducted in these countries have also revealed the common characteristics and needs that shape the targeted participant profile. In this context, the target audience for the modules prepared is as follows:*

### Primary Target Audience

**01**

#### **SMEs - Owners, Managers, and Employees**

The direct beneficiaries of the PEARL Curriculum are primarily the owners, managers, and employees of SMEs with high sustainability awareness and low ESG awareness. SMEs, which account for over 99% of businesses in Europe, employ approximately two-thirds of the workforce. However, analyses conducted in all project partner countries have indicated that most SME participants have low awareness of ESG. Nevertheless, it has been observed that there is generally a sense of awareness toward sustainability in many of these SMEs. Thirty-five percent of SME owners or managers who participated in the interviews stated that they did not have any ESG plans or strategies in their businesses. This highlights the need for training on ESG issues.

**02**

#### **Vocational Education and Training (VET) Providers and Trainers:**

Another direct user group of the PEARL Curriculum is VET experts who deliver ESG-focused education to SMEs. Within the scope of the PEARL project, a modular training framework structured around ESG-based core topics, detailed lesson plans, and trainer guides to support the teaching process will be developed, along with a specialized “Train-the-Trainer” methodology aimed at training educators.

**03**

#### **Adult Education Providers and Entrepreneurship Trainers**

PEARL resources are also suitable for adult education institutions, entrepreneurship trainers, and business incubators. New entrepreneurs and start-ups often lack the knowledge and resources to comply with ESG-related legal regulations. Thanks to the open-access structure of the PEARL resources, these institutions can also integrate it into their own training plans.

## Secondary Target Audience

01

### Sectoral Actors and Investors:

The PEARL curriculum is also expected to benefit investors, chambers of commerce and business associations, ESG experts, ESG consultants, and local support institutions that play a role in ESG transformation. These groups play an important role as information intermediaries and implementers for SMEs. Thanks to WP3-A4, the PEARL Toolbox provides local actors with matrices and templates such as ESG gap analysis, stakeholder mapping, risk-opportunity matrices, onboarding templates, etc., enabling them to implement PEARL content in the form of consulting, training, or policy support.

02

### Policy makers:

Policy makers are among the indirect beneficiaries of the PEARL curriculum. They are key actors in shaping strategies, incentives, and regulations related to sustainability, green transformation, and SMEs' ESG compliance. The ESG implementation gaps identified within the PEARL project summarize the challenges faced by SMEs and their awareness levels. These data provide a strong foundation for evidence-based policy making. Therefore, policymakers can integrate the PEARL curriculum into public support training policies. Thanks to its modular structure, adaptations tailored to different regions and sectors are also possible. The curriculum is directly linked to important EU regulations such as the European Green Deal, CSRD, CSDDD, and EU Taxonomy. For policymakers, this can serve as a guide for designing SME development programs that are compliant with legislation. Additionally, it can encourage the use of GreenComp, EntreComp, and DigComp-aligned models in SMEs during the ESG transformation process



## 1.3 Curriculum Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The PEARL Curriculum is a modular and application-oriented training framework designed to enable SMEs to gain knowledge, skills, and competencies in the field of ESG. The primary objective of the curriculum is to increase SMEs' ESG-focused activities and ensure that the VET sector becomes an effective actor in this transformation process. The PEARL curriculum has been developed in alignment with the PEARL Knowledge Framework, Partner Country Reports, and Interview Findings, and its primary objectives are as follows:



### Primary Objectives

01

#### Increase ESG Awareness:

Raise ESG awareness among SMEs, which is currently low, by informing them that ESG will become a strategic necessity for all businesses in the near future, not just large-scale enterprises.

02

#### To provide applicable ESG knowledge & skills:

To enable SMEs to develop ESG strategies that are compatible with their business models and allow them to take concrete steps, rather than setting unachievable goals, thereby increasing their capacity in areas such as environmental risks, social responsibility, governance structure, and regulatory compliance.

03

#### Improving ESG Risk Literacy:

By providing participants with concrete learning processes using tools such as materiality analysis, supply chain assessment, and ESG risk matrix, SMEs will improve their ability to identify, assess, and prioritize ESG-related risks.

04

#### Provide More Flexible Training:

Create flexible learning paths that can be adapted to the needs of different sectors, scales, and regions through a modular structure while offering content suitable for both self-learning (in OER format) and trainer-supported training.

05

#### Strengthen and Expand the VET Sector:

Enable VET trainers to provide more qualified training in ESG by offering specific methodologies, teacher guides, and application-based resources for trainer education.

*The long-term impact of the curriculum is not limited to individual learning outcomes but also prepares SMEs for ESG requirements while enhancing businesses' sustainability performance, thereby contributing to the European Green Deal and SDG targets.*

**The expected outcomes of this curriculum during and after the project are as follows:**

**01**

### **ESG Knowledge Outcomes:**

Participants will be able to explain the basic concepts of ESG, legal regulations, and their impact on SMEs, and SME managers will be able to develop ESG-compliant business plans.

**02**

### **ESG Skills Outcomes:**

Participants will gain the ability to assess ESG risks and opportunities, conduct materiality analysis, create ESG communication plans, and develop strategies through application-based exercises and case studies, enabling them to integrate ESG into their businesses.

**03**

### **ESG Attitude Outcomes:**

Participants will become more willing to embrace and disseminate ESG practices within their organizations, thereby fostering a more proactive and responsible perspective toward ESG activities across the organization.

**04**

### **Dissemination:**

The outputs of the PEARL project will be permanently embedded in VET systems and will reach wider audiences digitally. Thanks to the digital content created and made accessible, trainers will also be able to integrate ESG training into their own curricula.

**05**

### **Effective Use of Tools:**

The ESG Risk Matrix, Stakeholder Map, ESG Reporting Template, and other tools in the PEARL Toolbox will be directly integrated into SMEs' implementation processes to facilitate their ESG transformation process.

## 1.4 Connection to the PEARL Knowledge Framework

*The PEARL Curriculum is built on the PEARL Knowledge Framework, one of the cornerstones of the project. The curriculum is directly aligned with the missing areas which have been identified based on findings of the PEARL framework. The curriculum transforms the PEARL framework into an easy-to-follow learning structure consisting of six interconnected modules.*

*The content and module structure of the curriculum have been shaped by data obtained from country reports (Turkey, Germany, Poland, Denmark, Ireland), semi-structured interviews (VET experts, SME representatives, ESG experts), and gap analyses and training needs assessments conducted within the scope of the PEARL project.*

The PEARL framework, created to increase ESG awareness and risk literacy, enable SMEs to develop ESG strategies, and support VET providers in delivering ESG training tailored to SMEs, has been designed in line with the EntreComp (Entrepreneurship Competences) and DigComp (Digital Competences) competence frameworks. Each module of the PEARL Curriculum is designed to provide the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for ESG transformation within this knowledge framework. Modules 1, 2, and 5 provide information on the basic concepts of ESG, legal regulations, and sustainability principles. Module 3

develops risk management and strategic prioritization skills, while Module 4 enables SMEs to develop strategic plans and integrate ESG into their business processes. Module 5 strengthens transparency, ethical perspective, and communication skills. Module 6 focuses on financial planning and long-term strategy development. Thus, all modules aim to foster ownership and proactive action toward ESG in SMEs. This structure demonstrates that the curriculum is fully aligned with the PEARL Knowledge Framework and that each module is backed by a research-based learning rationale.

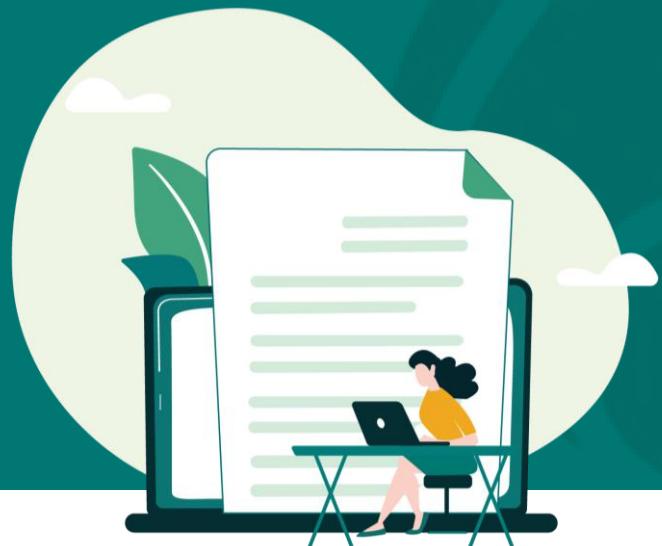
*The PEARL curriculum aims to enable SMEs to adopt a holistic and systematic approach to ESG processes. To this end, the training is designed not only to transfer knowledge but also to bring about behavioral change.*



## 2.1 Pedagogical Approach

The PEARL Curriculum has been designed in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) calculation methods. According to generally accepted criteria, 1 ECTS corresponds to approximately 25–30 hours of total student workload. In this context, the PEARL Curriculum is worth approximately 3 ECTS, with a total target trainee workload of 90 hours.

This total workload includes not only learning hours but also additional readings, individual work, applications, and assessment processes. The recommended structured workload distribution of the curriculum is as follows (Table 1).



**Table 1. Activity Estimated Hourly Workload (Total 90 Hours)**

Activity Type	Estimated Duration (Hours)	Description of Implementation
Learning Environment	30 hours	6 modules × 5 hours of content (videos, presentations, lectures, readings)
Additional readings, videos, case studies	20 hours	Additional resources and recommendations provided within each module
Individual work and practical application	25 hours	Application of ESG concepts to participants' own businesses in each module
Assessment (quizzes, assignments, feedback and projects)	15 hours	Includes quizzes, planning exercises, and peer review activities

**The training approach is designed based on the following 3 core principles:**

**01**

**Learner-Centered:**

This allows participants to customize the material to fit their own industry, business, and location.

**02**

**Modular:**

The six separate modules, each of which is in line with a particular ESG theme, can be used separately or in tandem to create a comprehensive program.

**03**

**Flexible:**

The program offers Open Educational Resources (OER) that can be used for self-paced learning as well as instructor-led delivery, whether it be online or in person.



*This approach provides a balanced and comprehensive learning experience that enables participants to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes in ESG topics. The modular structure of the curriculum allows for a flexible and comprehensive learning process, adaptable to the diverse needs of SMEs and educators. As a result, the PEARL Curriculum is designed to meet all the academic and practical requirements of a program at the 3 ECTS level. This pedagogical approach is also fully aligned with the European Qualifications Framework and key competence frameworks such as GreenComp, EntreComp, and DigComp, while ensuring adaptability to the structural diversity of SMEs.*

## 2.2 Integration of EntreComp, GreenComp, DigComp

*The PEARL Curriculum is structured in line with the EntreComp (Entrepreneurship Competence Framework), GreenComp (Green Competence Framework), and DigComp (Digital Competence Framework) basic competence frameworks, which are recognized across Europe.*

*These frameworks are integrated into each module to ensure that participants not only gain technical knowledge and skills in ESG but also develop awareness, take action for ESG transformation, and innovate. The educational content developed within the PEARL project lies at the intersection of these three frameworks.*

Alignment with the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework: EntreComp aims to develop the capacity of individuals and organizations to recognize opportunities, mobilize resources, and create value. The PEARL Curriculum has been

designed to encourage participants to think entrepreneurially. With this curriculum, participants are expected to develop awareness, resilience, and value creation competencies related to ESG opportunities.

**The areas of application of this framework in the PEARL Curriculum are as follows:**

- Identifying and evaluating opportunities to analyze the strategic advantages offered by ESG (**Modules 1, 3, and 4**)
- Taking the initiative to develop strategies to create an ESG vision and value-based leadership within the business (**Modules 2 and 4**)
- Developing and implementing action plans to translate ESG strategies into concrete steps (**Modules 4 and 6**)
- Developing communication and stakeholder management to effectively convey ESG messages to internal and external stakeholders (**Module 5**)

Alignment with the European Sustainability Competence Framework: GreenComp focuses on developing individuals' abilities to think systemically, act responsibly, and create individual/social impact

for sustainability. The PEARL curriculum will enable participants to develop their awareness and vision of sustainability, as well as their ability to take responsibility and make decisions.

## The PEARL curriculum, in line with GreenComp principles:

- Encourages systemic thinking by analyzing the holistic impact of ESG on the value chain, supply chain, and corporate structure (**Module 3**).
- Emphasizes that ESG is a value-based approach and develops critical thinking and ethical awareness (**Modules 2 and 5**).
- Developing participants' responsibility and transformation skills, expecting them to develop individual ESG action plans (**Modules 3, 5, and 6**).
- Focusing on understanding the complexity and interdependence of ESG factors and internalizing ecological, social, and governance impacts (**Modules 3 and 4**).

Alignment with the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens: DigComp aims to develop individual capacities in the areas of digital literacy, information management, digital communication, and problem

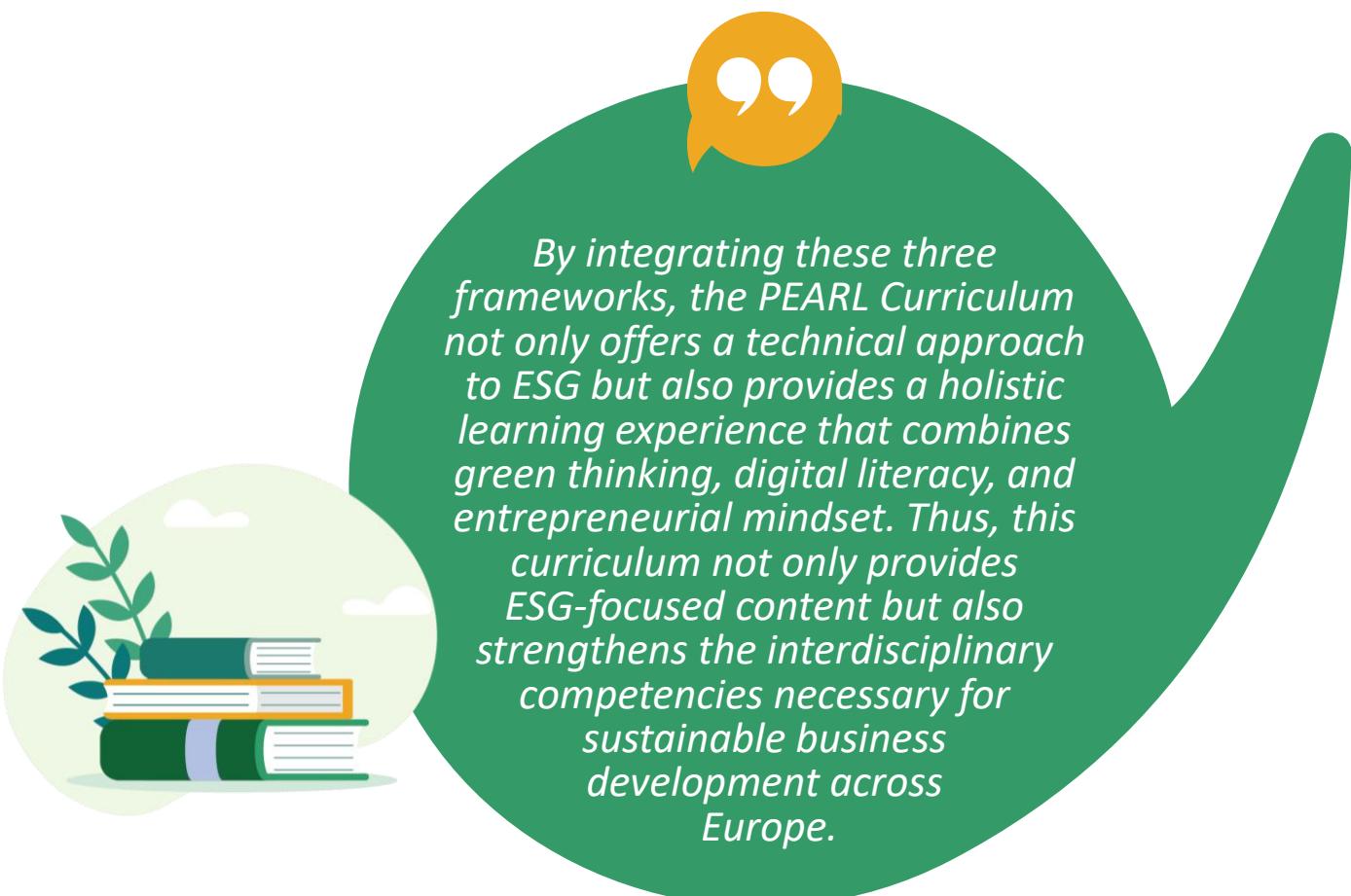
solving. The PEARL Curriculum equips participants with digital data management, content creation, digital security, online collaboration, and technology-enabled problem-solving skills.

## The curriculum intersects with this framework in the following areas.

- Ensuring the use of digital ESG tools necessary for businesses through the effective use of tools such as ESG Risk Assessment Application, CO<sub>2</sub> Footprint Calculation Tool, Stakeholder Mapping, and ESG Reporting Templates (**Modules 3, 4, and 5**).
- Digital collection, interpretation, and visualization of ESG indicators to enable data literacy and digital reporting (**Modules 1 and 5**).
- Access to digital resources and OER (Open Educational Resources), with all modules available in multiple languages and digital formats, supports self-learning (**all modules**)

**Table 2. The Relationship between PEARL Modules and EU Frameworks**

Module	EntreComp	GreenComp	DigComp
Introduction to ESG	Opportunity recognition	Systems thinking	Online ESG resources
ESG Onboarding, Vision and Responsibility	Leadership & value creation	Personal responsibility	Stakeholder tools
ESG Risk Analysis and Materiality Assessment	Problem solving	Interconnectedness	Data analysis
ESG Strategy and Implementation	Planning & mobilizing	Acting for sustainability	KPI dashboards
Reporting, Communication and Branding	Storytelling & influence	Transparency & ethics	Digital branding
Sustainable Financing and Funding Options for SMEs.	Resource mobilization	Long-term impact vision	Online funding tools



# Module Descriptions

03

*Our Modular Learning Materials will offer flexible and engaging resources tailored for VET programs. These materials combine theory and practice, ensuring learners gain valuable skills to tackle ESG challenges. With a focus on real-world applications, they foster a culture of sustainability in SMEs, paving the way for innovative business practices*



## Introduction to ESG

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Module 01

## ESG Onboarding, Vision and Responsibility

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Module 02

## ESG Strategy and Implementation

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Module 03

## ESG Risk Analysis and Materiality Assessment

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Module 04

## Reporting, Communication and Branding

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Module 05

## Sustainable Financing and Funding Options for SMEs

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Module 06

*This module discusses why ESG issues are strategically important and should be viewed as such. Participants are given a comprehensive overview of the key drivers of ESG, planetary boundaries, regulatory obligations like CSRD, Taxonomy, and CSDDD, stakeholder expectations, and market risks in this regard. The module highlights that ESG is a strategy that increases the competitiveness of SMEs as well as being a regulatory requirement.*

*ESG trends in various industries and drivers of change spurred by customer demands are investigated in this paper. The risks involved in overlooking ESG and how a sustainability strategy contributes to long-term business success are assessed through presenting examples of ESG strategies applicable to SMEs embracing the VSME model. While giving the fundamental knowledge base for businesses to raise their awareness, this module is intended to motivate the participants to undertake ESG benchmarking.*

#### Module Structure

- Overview about different drivers for ESG / Sustainability (planetary boundaries, regulations, stakeholders, risks)
- Trends in client and market driven ESG needs and requirements
- Employee perspective
- ESG regulations deepdive (CSRD, Taxonomy, CSDDD)
- VSME as blue print
- Risks of ignoring ESG and relevance of ESG for SMEs
- Benchmarking and Trends in industries

- **O1:** Differentiate between the definition, elements, and difference between ESG and Sustainability
- **O2:** Explain the importance of ESG as a strategic imperative for SMEs
- **O3:** Understand key EU regulations (CSRD, EU Taxonomy, CSDDD)
- **O4:** Identify ESG trends and customer/supply chain pressure relevant to their industry
- **O5:** Evaluate the opportunities and risks that ESG implementation could provide for their businesses.

## Module learning outcomes

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Articulate the link between ESG and sustainability and legal compliance,
- Articulate the way ESG drives market and investor demands - with examples,
- Conduct basic SWOT analysis for their own businesses with ESG threats and opportunities,
- Begin determining maturity level on ESG matters,
- Identify first steps for ESG alignment and begin the process of internal awareness.

## Module Tools

### Industry & Competitor Check

Identification of market trends and ESG requirements in the respective industries

## Related competences (ref. PEARL framework)

### EntreComp



- Spotting opportunities
- Vision
- Valuing ideas
- Taking the initiative

### GreenComp



- Systems thinking
- Futures literacy
- Valuing
- Exploratory thinking

### DigiComp



- Managing data, information and digital content
- Information and data literacy

*This module addresses comprehensively the corporate preparations necessary to drive the ESG transformation process in companies.*

*Consequently, SME owners and managers acquire skills on how to identify steps needed to incorporate ESG into organizational frameworks and get internal stakeholders meaningfully engaged in the process.*

*At this module, learners are provided with practical steps such as establishing an ESG team, involving senior managers and major stakeholders in the process, project planning, and developing an internal communication strategy. Furthermore, within this module that analyses pre-conditions for preparing the business for ESG transformation, not only do the participants have to acquire technical competencies but also develop the ability to apply ESG concepts in the context of change management, delegating responsibility, and fostering internal awareness.*

#### Module Structure

- Appointment of the ESG team
- Onboarding: C-level, sensitization of managers and relevant stakeholders
- Definition of important project milestones and coordination of the communication plan for the project
- ESG Onboarding of relevant stakeholders
- Preparation for transformation

#### Learning objectives

- **O1:** Plan appropriate team formation for ESG implementation processes,
- **O2:** Link to internal stakeholders through onboarding processes,
- **O3:** Create project road maps for ESG transformation,
- **O4:** Create internal strategies for communication and awareness for ESG,
- **O5:** Explore preparation processes for ESG transformation.

## Module learning outcomes

### After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Establish a team to take on the ESG responsibilities in their organizations
- Design the onboarding process to sensitize and inform senior managers and employees about the role and importance of the ESG process.
- Articulate the primary steps and timeline for an ESG project,
- Prepare a communication plan and internal stakeholder map,
- Articulate if the organization is ready to transform at the corporate level.

## Module Tools

### Project Milestone Plan for ESG Integration

Structured roadmap for implementing ESG measures.

### ESG Team Setup & Responsibilities

Clear role allocation for ESG-related tasks within the company.

### Stakeholder Analysis (Internal & External)

Identification of key internal and external ESG stakeholders.

### Onboarding Tool for Internal Decision-Makers

Introduction to ESG strategies and requirements tailored for key stakeholders.

## Related competences (ref. PEARL framework)

### EntreComp



- Mobilising others
- Mobilising resources
- Planning and management
- Working with others
- Self-awareness and self-efficacy

### GreenComp



- Supporting fairness
- Collective action
- Promoting nature
- Individual initiative

### DigiComp



- Collaborating through digital technologies
- Developing digital content
- Protecting personal data and privacy

This module provides SMEs with a framework for identifying and examining ESG-associated opportunities and risk. Participants learn to examine the impact of direct and indirect ESG rules on their business, identify gaps from their current state, and benchmark against industry practice. The module presents the concept of "double materiality," defining materiality assessment and how SMEs can prioritize ESG issues based on their business plans. Participants learn to assess ESG impacts on the value chain through stakeholders as a reference point. This module attempts to develop data-driven and stakeholder-informed decision-making frameworks on which ESG strategy is constructed. The module also addresses an integrated approach in the sense that it roots legal rules with risk analysis.

### Module Structure

- Examination of the impact of ESG regulations (direct / indirect) and further Risks
- Value stream and Gap analysis (overview about existing activities in the company and relevant requirements from regulations and stakeholder)
- Cross-Check with industry related standards
- Definition of IROs
- Involvement of internal and external stakeholders
- Carrying out the materiality analysis

### Learning objectives

- **O1:** Analysing the impact of ESG regulations on organizations,
- **O2:** Understand the current status and gaps with respect to regulations and stakeholder expectations for ESG,
- **O3:** Perform and compare ESG assessments against sector-specific standards,
- **O4:** Categorize key ESG risks and opportunities (IROs) systematically,
- **O5:** Incorporate stakeholder perspectives into assessment processes,
- **O6:** Learn to perform materiality analysis strategically to establish ESG priorities for a corporate organization

## Module learning outcomes

## Module 03

At the conclusion of this module participants will be able to:

- Accurately assess their organizations' ESG obligations they adhere to directly and indirectly,
- Critically analyse current state in response to regulations and stakeholder expectations and identify gaps,
- Evaluate against standard by sector,
- Understand and indicate what the key risks and opportunities are in the ESG landscape,
- Incorporate internal and external stakeholder voices in the collective assessment process systematically,
- Carry out a materiality analysis that both suits them as organizations.

## Module Tools

### ESG Gap Analysis

Comparison between the current ESG status and necessary improvements.

### Value Chain Analysis

Assessment of ESG relevance along the entire value chain.

### ESG Risk-Opportunity Matrix

Identification and evaluation of ESG risks and opportunities in a structured format.

### ESG Impact Assessment Matrix

Evaluation of a company's impact on the environment and society.

### Climate Risk Check for SMEs

Assessment of climate risks and their potential impact on the business.

### ESG Materiality Analysis

Identification and prioritization of key ESG topics for the company.

### Supply Chain Risk Check

Assessment of ESG risks in the supply chain.

## Related competences (ref. PEARL framework)

### EntreComp



- Coping with uncertainty and risk
- Spotting opportunities
- Planning and management
- Taking the initiative
- Ethical and sustainable thinking

### GreenComp



- Systems thinking
- Critical thinking
- Problem framing
- Collective action

### DigiComp



- Evaluating data, information and digital content
- Managing data, information and digital content
- Creatively using digital technologies

*This module develops the ability of businesses in strategic planning and operational implementation in ESG. Students learn to set ESG indicator-based targets in terms of data points and KPIs, abstracting concrete actions from the targets, and aligning these with the corporate sustainability strategy.*

*This module covers elementary implementation steps such as governance structure setup (PDCA cycle), carbon footprint tracking, and structuring of ESG processes from a project/change management perspective. The module also provides a systematic framework to integrate strategic ESG targets into routine activities.*

## Module Structure

- Defining objectives and deriving measures based on the datapoints / KPIs for the key topics (ESG controlling)
- Implementation of Governance control mechanisms (PDCA)
- CO2 Footprint tracking
- Definition and alignment of corporate and sustainability strategy
- Change / Project Management

## Learning objectives

- **O1:** Developing measurable objectives for ESG, and developing data-driven initiatives,
- **O2:** Setting up a quality cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) system for ESG governance,
- **O3:** Managing and interpreting examples of environmental indicators such as carbon footprint,
- **O4:** Aligning ESG objectives with overall corporate objectives,
- **O5:** Embedding ESG initiatives using established change/project management processes

## Module learning outcomes

**By the end of this module, participants will be able to:**

- Embed ESG best practice into continuous improvement processes through PDCA,
- Complete basic carbon footprint calculations for their own businesses,
- Align ESG objectives with corporate objectives in an uniratory way,
- Organise ESG transformation using project management principles,
- Establish targets and measurement criteria (KPIs) based on ESG data points.

## Module Tools

### OKR Framework for ESG Goals with Top 5 ESG Topics

Defining clear ESG objectives with measurable outcomes.

### PDCA Template for ESG Governance

Simple template for tracking and managing ESG performance.

### ESG Key Metrics Overview for SMEs (VSME Standard)

Easy-to-use template for recording and monitoring ESG performance.

### CO<sub>2</sub> Footprint Overview for SMEs

Basic check for estimating carbon emissions with minimal effort.

### Supplier Mapping with Matrix

Overview of suppliers and potential ESG control options.

### Diversity Datapoints

Overview about Diversity related datapoints

## Related competences (ref. PEARL framework)

### EntreComp



- Planning and management
- Mobilising resources
- Learning through experience
- Taking the initiative
- Coping with uncertainty and risk
- Motivation and perseverance

### GreenComp



- Adaptability
- Collective action
- Futures literacy
- Systems thinking

### DigiComp



- Creatively using digital technologies
- Managing data, information and digital content
- Collaborating through digital technologies

*Module 5 aims to enable businesses to report their ESG performance in an open, systematic, and strategic manner, enhancing their corporate image and reacting effectively to stakeholders' expectations. Through module 5, participants learn rudimentary knowledge and skills in selecting information on materiality analysis, preparing sustainability reports, and disclosing information on reporting language and materiality analysis.*

*In addition, the integration of ESG factors into the business brand, development of external communications about ESG, and ethical standards for avoiding "greenwashing" risks are all comprehensively addressed. The module provides a roadmap to comply with ESG regulation, conduct sustainability reporting, and create corporate sustainability in the firm.*

### Module Structure

- Design and formulation of the sustainability report
- Presentation of relevant information based on the materiality analysis
- Integration of ESG in corporate branding and presentation of ESG in external communication
- Greenwashing

### Learning objectives

- **O1:** Effectively reporting ESG information from materiality analysis,
- **O2:** Create sustainability reports suitable for SMEs
- **O3:** Embedding ESG components into brand value and communication strategy
- **O4:** Recognize greenwashing risks and provide credible ESG communication.

## Module learning outcomes

### At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Develop a simple, clear and structured sustainability report for their own organizations,
- Select data based on materiality analysis, and represent data in an appropriate form,
- Embed ESG strategies into brand identity and customer relationship,
- Identify greenwashing practices and create ethically communicated strategies to mitigate them.

## Module Tools

### Template for ESG Report (VSME Standard)

Standardized reporting template tailored for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

### ESG Communication Guide for SMEs

Practical guidance for clear and effective ESG communication.

## Related competences (ref. PEARL framework)

### EntreComp



- Learning through experience
- Ethical and sustainable thinking
- Working with others
- Valuing ideas
- Taking the initiative
- Creativity

### GreenComp



- Valuing
- Supporting fairness
- Critical thinking
- Collective action
- Political agency

### DigiComp



- Developing digital content
- Collaborating through digital technologies
- Evaluating data, information and digital content
- Protecting personal data and privacy

# Sustainable Financing and Funding Options for SMEs

Module  
06

*One of the major challenges that SMEs face in their ESG transformation process is financial constraints. Hence, Module 6 introduces the financial instruments SMEs need and can receive in order to implement and sustain ESG practices.*

*The trainees gain comprehensive knowledge of funding opportunities available at the national level, along with sustainable finance opportunities offered by the European Union.*

*Understanding the financial dimension of ESG objectives, identifying key points in finance uses, and strategic utilization of available funds are some of the main issues of this module. The module also provides an overview of topics such as financial literacy, risk perception, and clear disclosure of a company's ESG track record to potential investors.*

Module Overview – Module 06

## Module Structure

- National Funding Option
- EU Funding Option

## Learning objectives

- **O1:** Identify ESG-aligned financial support and incentive schemes available to SMEs in their own countries,
- **O2:** Identify the differences between the funding programs that are offered by the EU.
- **O3:** Select the most appropriate funding sources for ESG projects and plan the application process accordingly
- **O4:** Develop long-term ESG investment strategies that are aligned with the principles of sustainable finance.

## Module learning outcomes

After completing this module, participants will have the ability to:

- Examine and contrast national and EU sustainable finance instruments critically.
- Create a project concept with an ESG focus that is appropriate for funding applications.
- Include financial resources in their overall ESG plan.
- Within their SMEs, develop and oversee sustainable investment procedures.

## Module Tools

### Sustainable Finance Options for SMEs

Overview of sustainable financing opportunities and ESG funding programs



## Related competences (ref. PEARL framework)

### EntreComp



- Mobilising resources
- Financial and economic literacy
- Vision
- Taking the initiative
- Ethical and sustainable thinking
- Planning and management

### GreenComp



- Futures literacy
- Adaptability
- Problem framing
- Collective action

### DigiComp



- Evaluating data, information and digital content
- Collaborating through digital technologies
- Managing data, information and digital content
- Developing digital content



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